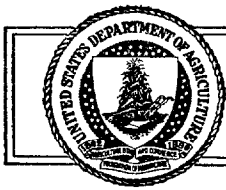


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TO STABILIZE WILDLIFE POPULATION  
IN THE NATIONAL FORESTS, IS AIM

Restoration of Habitat Necessary, Forest Service Wildlife  
Management Chief Tells Audubon Societies  
Meeting In New York

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Management of wildlife on the National Forests is assuming an importance equal to that of the management of other basic resources, Dr. H. L. Shantz, Chief of the Division of Wildlife Management of the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, said today in an address at the National Association of Audubon Societies meeting in New York City.

Stressing the fact that the national forest system, embracing more than 170 million acres constitutes the largest area now being managed for the protection, rehabilitation and maintenance under natural conditions, of the wildlife of the nation, Dr. Shantz outlined the future program of the Forest Service in increasing and stabilizing the animal, bird and fish population of the National Forests.

"More than 75 percent of all the big game ranges, either yearlong or part of the year, are on the National Forests in the West," he said. "On them, there has been a rapid and sustained increase in most big game since these Forests were established. Even in the last twelve years, most of the larger game animals have doubled their numbers."

Dr. Shantz said that the Forest Service's program held three major aims: (1) to build up the wildlife habitat; (2) to increase the wildlife population; and (3)

to manage wildlife as to establish a sustained population.

"Under the first," he said, "the problems are many because in order to build up the habitat we must: protect from fire; apply proper methods of silviculture and lumbering; consider wildlife needs when developing recreation facilities; prevent over-use by domestic livestock and by wildlife itself; improve streams and lakes as a home for fish and other aquatic animals; reduce stream pollution caused by erosion and careless industrial use.

"Under the second -- to increase the wildlife population -- we must protect vanishing and rare species; protect wildlife where its populations are sparse; restore, insofar as practicable, the original range of the species; insure the continuation of predators by a sparse but widely distributed population; and raise the annual wildlife population to the highest sustained production, maintaining always a reasonable margin of safety in food supply.

"Under the third, many difficulties are presented which will require honest thinking on the part of all, for the reason that sentiment is so great a part of the wildlife program. This is as it should be, and all of us who are interested in wildlife are glad of it. Still there must be a willingness to face the facts and not entirely forget the realities of the case."

Letting "Nature take its course" is by no means the answer to restoration and maintenance of our wildlife population, Dr. Shantz said. Such a course has already resulted in the disappearance of certain species and deterioration of herds in size and vigor. Instead, he advocated management on a "biological basis, employing our best results in ecological science as a constant means of improving upon methods, and above all, work toward a natural condition wherever it can be done without sacrificing the social and economic value of the forests as a whole."

Dr. Shantz continued: "Briefly, one of our greatest needs in administering wildlife are State Conservation or Game Departments, with power to open or close areas to hunting, fishing, and trapping, where such action is dictated by biological need.

"There is little hope of adequately increasing the forest wildlife population of game birds, game animals, or furbearers, unless the areas can be closed to protect the animals from hunters and trappers, and opened to hunters for the protection of food supply, as soon as overuse is indicated by the destruction of preferred browse.

"Therefore, our first great needs are State Fish and Game Commissions which shall be set up with power to act, and which will not materially change personnel every time political changes are made in the State. It is important, therefore, that we have public opinion which is willing to place in the hands of qualified men, the responsibility of carrying out a biologically sound policy of wildlife management for big game and upland species.

"Where upland and big game refuges are set up by legislative action and can be opened only by legislative action, the environment has invariably been damaged, more or less permanently, by over-population. In notable cases thousands of animals have died of starvation before public sentiment would back legislative action in opening such refuges for the removal of the excess animals.

"We must appeal to you to aid us in so administering our forests that we can insure a sustained production of wildlife and prevent wild game from over-populating, to their own detriment. It is fatal to allow the herd to become so large that the annual increase cannot be removed in case of necessity. The future welfare of our larger game animals would be jeopardized by a system of established refuges where removal of excess cannot be controlled. We have ample evidence of the damage occurring on areas where such a policy is carried out.

"The Forest Service joins with you in an effort to preserve and maintain our fauna under conditions as natural as possible. We see no possibility, in this program, for the extermination of any of our wildlife species, be they plants or animals, but we cannot allow overpopulation of any form to destroy the habitat for those which have an equal right to a place to live; nor can we see herds of deer and elk destroy themselves by destroying the browse on which they must depend for food.

"For the preservation of wildlife we have the greatest opportunity ever afforded any agency, and the Forest Service has always been an outstanding agency of conservation in the country. At present, more than 75 percent of all game animals in the United States are on National Forests. We have about 70,000 miles of trout stream which we are maintaining and returning to a more natural and productive state. Our lakes and swamps are also being fitted into the great waterfowl-restoration program being carried on by the Biological Survey.

"Furbearers, bear, mountain sheep and goats need further protection, as do many other forms. This we hope to give by doing our part, which includes cooperation with Federal, State, and private agencies working to the same end.

"When the great program of conservation was started at the beginning of this century, watershed protection and perpetuation of forests were the chief objects. As we look back we realize how tremendously significant was this movement. It would take a writer with the imagination of Dante to picture to us what might have been the condition of our western mountains and valleys had not something of this sort been done. Barren mountain slopes, delivering almost 100 percent of a heavy rain to funnel-like canyons, carrying boulders and debris, covering fertile lands and filling reservoirs, wreck not only the mountain sides and canyons but destroy the valleys as well.

"Even today, where grazing has been heavy or where repeated fires have destroyed the vegetation, near the bed of dry arroyos which may in an hour become destructive torrents of water, mud, and rock, man lives in constant peril of property and life.

"Extend this to the whole area, intensify it ten times by the higher forested lands, and the picture of desolation would equal that found anywhere in the world. But, thanks to the forethought of pioneer conservationists, many streams are for the most part clear, many mountains are covered with much of the original forest, and much of the wildlife abounds in its original home."